

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-07

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S E C R E T JIDDA 4300

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY, SA
SUBJECT: LEBANESE-SYRIAN UNITY AND SAUDI ARABIA

REF: (A) STATE 120270, (B) CAIRO 9435, (C) BEIRUT 2825
(D) BEIRUT 2828

SUMMARY: FROM THE JIDDA PERSPECTIVE WE DETECT NOTHING WHICH
WOULD INDICATE A SYRIAN MOVE TOWARDS SOME KIND OF UNION WITH
LEBANON. IF SUCH A SCHEME WERE TO SURFACE THE SAUDIS WOULDN'T
LIKE IT AND WOULD PROBABLY OPPOSE IT WITH WHAT MEANS THEY HAD
AT THEIR DISPOSAL. IT COULD LEAD TO THE KIND OF SYRIAN-SAUDI
RIVALRY LEBANESE LEADERS ALLEGE NOW EXISTS. FROM HERE, HOWEVER,
THERE IS ALSO NO SIGN OF SYRIAN-SAUDI RIVALRY. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE IS GENERALLY A POLITICAL MOTIVATION BEHIND SAUDI
AID PROGRAMS BUT WE THINK THE LEBANESE SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS IN
ASCRIBING SAUDI FOOT DRAGGING ON AID TO LEBANON TO RIVALRY

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WITH SYRIA; THAT IS A BIT RECHERCHE TO FIT THE SAUDI STYLE.
THE SAUDIS WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO SPEND IN A WAY THAT WOULD
UNDERCUT SYRIAN INFLUENCE THAN TO ATTEMPT TO DO IT BY WITH-
HOLDING HELP FOR THE LEBANESE. (THE SAUDIS HAVE NOT BEEN AT
ALL FORTHCOMING WITH US ON THEIR SPENDING PLANS FOR LEBANON
THOUGH MORE INFORMATIVE AFTER THE FACT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO
PRY.)

2. AS FOR THE SAUDI LACK OF HELPFULNESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CAIRO ACCORDS, WE THINK THIS IS PROBABLY INFLUENCED PRIMARILY BY THE SAUDIS' OWN RELATIONS WITH THE PLO--THOUGH TO BE SURE THERE IS AN IMPRTANT SYRIAN FACTOR IN THESE RELATIONS. THESE RELATIONS DIFFER FROM THOSE OF EGYPT AND SYRIA IN THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE NO INTEREST AT PRESENT IN MANIPULATING THE PAL-ESTINIANS FOR ANY GOAL OF THEIR OWN. NEITHER DO THE SAUDIS HAVE ANY INTEREST IN SEEING THE PLO FALL COMPLETELY UNDER THE CONTROL EITHER OF EGYPT OR SYRIA: THEY THINK THE PLO ENTITLED TO AN INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE; THEY DO NOT WISH TO SEE EITHER COUNTRY'S POWER ENHANCED IN THIS MANNER, AND THEY ARE AFRAID OF ANOTHER FALLING OUT BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA ALMOST SURE TO RESULT FROM SUCH A DEVELOPMENT. IN THIS LIGHT IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THE SAUDIS ARE NOT COOPERATING WITH THE SYRIANS IN LEBANON AS MUCH AS THE LATTER WOULD LIKE AND DOUBTLESS THINK THE SAUDIS SHOULD.

3. CONCERNING THE QUESTION OF SYRIAN CONTROL OF LEBANON TENDING TOWARD UNIFICATION, WE THINK THIS WOULD LEAD TO TROUBLE BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE KINGDOM. THE SAUDIS HAVE A LIVE-AND-LET-LIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BAATH REGIME IN SYRIA; ASAD HAS GIVEN IT AN ASPECT THEY CAN GET ALONG WITH THOUGH THEY ARE AS OPPOSED AS EVER TO BAATH IDEOLOGY. THEY WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE THE EXTENSION OF BAATHI INFLUENCE TO LEBANON ON IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDS AND ALSO BECAUSE OF THE UNUSUAL RELATIONSHIP SAUDI ARABIA HAS WITH LEBANON. SO MUCH HAS CHANGED IN LEBANON WHAT IT IS DIFFICULT NOW TO RECALL HOW THINGS WERE BEFORE THE TROUBLES WHEN SAUDI ARABIA
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AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER SUBSIDIZED HALF THE RIGHT-OF-CENTER LEBANESE POLITICIANS-CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM""AND FOUGHT VERBAL BATTLES WITH ARAB RADICALS AND LEFTISTS--INCLUDING SYRIA--THROUGH BOUGHT BEIRUT NEWSPAPERS. SAUDIS BY THE THOUSANDS ESTIVATED IN LEBANON, SPENT MILLIONS AND FELT COMFORTABLY AT HOME. SAUDIS AND LEBANESE ALMOST INVARIABLY SPOKE OF EACH OTHER WITH CONTEMPT, BUT THEY KNEW AND IN A WAY CAME TO LIKE EACH OTHER. THE SAUDIS KNOW LEBANON IS NO LONGER WHAT IT WAS, BUT THEY WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE IT BECOME (AGAIN) A PROVINCE OF SYRIA.

4. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE RATHER SENTIMENTAL OBJECTION SYRIAN/LEBANESE UNION, THERE ARE SOME HARD-HEADED ONES. A SYRO-LEBANESE ENTITY WOULD BE A STRONG POLE OF ATTRACTION FOR THE JORDANIANS. A JORDANIAN/SYRIAN/LEBANESE ENTITY (IN EFFECT GREATER SYRIA) WOULD BE A POTENTIALLY VERY POWERFUL AND PERHAPS RADICAL STATE DIRECTLY BORDERING SAUDI ARABIA. WE THINK MERE CONTEMPLATION OF SUCH A POSSIBILITY WOULD MAKE THE SAUDIS NERVOUS. WITNESS THE SAUDI COLDNESS AND

IRRITATION AT THE TENTATIVE JORDANIAN MOVES TOWARDS CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE SYRIANS. AND AGAIN, THE SAG KNOWS THAT A LEBANESE-SYRIAN UNIFICATION WOULD GET THE EGYPTIANS' WIND UP AND, AS NOTED ABOVE, THEY DON'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN AGAIN. THE SAUDIS ARE MORE COMFORTABLE AND CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY EXERT THEIR INFLUENCE IN A SITUATION IN WHICH NONE OF THE NEIGHBORING ARAB STATES IS MADE AT ANOTHER AND NONE HAS FALLEN UNDER THE CONTROL OF ANOTHER.

5. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE SAUDIS APPRECIATE THE POSITIVE ROLE THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE PLAYED IN LEBANON. THEY MAY NOW BE A BIT WARY LEST THE SYRIAN ROLE BECOME TOO POSITIVE., BUT IT DOES NOT APPEAR FROM HERE THAT THE SAG IS UNDULY CONCERNED BY SYRIAN ACTIONS TO DATE.
HORAN

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